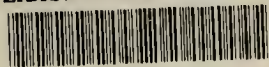


E 182

.G82

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00002733961







C325
78

Our Minor Naval Wars

By Rear Admiral James A. Greer, U. S. N.

Washington, D. C. 1897

Our Minor Naval Wars

BY REAR ADMIRAL JAMES A. GREER, U. S. N.

THIS paper, largely compiled from the naval histories found in most libraries, has been prepared for the purpose of refreshing the memory of those who have not had time, opportunity, or inclination to follow a study that has become a subject of paramount interest.

The story of the trials and tribulations incident to the creation and development of the navy after the close of the Revolutionary War, with also a reference to some interesting events in connection with what may be termed our Minor Naval Wars.

Attention has not been called to the "War of 1812" and the naval operations of the war between the States. These are deserving of separate papers, the former as developing the value of heavy ships, good marksmanship, and the adoption of new ideas in naval gunnery. The latter in changing all existing ideas of naval warfare, brought about by the ingenuity of Ericsson, exemplified in the *Monitor*, in contradistinction to the comparatively poorly protected ironclads of that day.

It is with feelings of distress and shame not unmingled with indignation, that the patriotic American of these days reads such parts of the history of his country as have a bearing upon the navy during the years that immediately followed the War of the Revolution.

As soon as that war was over all the personnel of the naval service was turned adrift and every vessel was sold. Why was this? The sacrifice was made, because the people of the new nation feared that scheming politicians might use the navy to enslave their own people.

The business men looked around to see how they could

retrieve the losses brought upon them by the war, and found but two sources of income worthy of consideration—the commerce of the seas and agriculture.

Vessels were rapidly built and the contest for supremacy in trade which had much to do with bringing on the War of the Revolution was renewed with energy. As an example, I refer to the fact that so small a vessel as an "Albany sloop," the *Enterprise*, Captain Dean, of eighty tons burden, sailed in 1785 from New York to Canton, China, with a page map from a school geography for a chart, and returned the same year in safety, being the first vessel to make the direct passage from New York to China waters. British merchants saw with dismay that Yankee ships were chosen by shippers because they were safe and swift.

About this time the Barbary States were levying tribute from every sea-faring nation; Great Britain deliberately encouraged these pirates because they harrassed other nations and who, on her paying a small tribute, on account of her powerful navy, left her commerce wholly unmolested.

Previous to 1793, Portugal had by means of a strong fleet, kept near the Straits of Gibraltar, protected her commerce. By an understanding with the United States the American flag was protected and convoy furnished when needed. Under an agreement of the so-called Christian Powers, Great Britain was allowed to act for all in minor matters when negotiating with the Barbary States. The British agent at Algiers bargained secretly for a truce between the Dey and Portugal, which for certain considerations was to last a year, and Portugal *was not to afford protection to any nation against Algerine cruisers*. The only nation that had been protected was the American. This truce was undoubtedly planned to turn the pirates against American vessels. It was done secretly, without even consulting the Portugese Government, and it was only prevented from abrogation by strong British influence at the Portugese Court. This was in 1793.

As early as July, 1785, American vessels had been captured by these pirates, and the crews made slaves. This went



Gift from
Mrs. Nathan S. Jenin
Nov. 1880

on for years. Did the United States declare war at once? They could not. There was not a war-ship afloat bearing the American flag, and up to 1798 tribute was paid to the Algerines to secure the release of the captives in hand, and it is a matter of surprise and mortification to know that on one occasion the United States presented the Dey with a frigate and presents, amounting in all to the value of about one million dollars.

After all the humiliations the United States had submitted to, it was only by a majority of two in Congress, that a resolution authorizing a naval force adequate to the protection of our commerce was adopted. It was approved on March 27, 1794.

Six frigates, among them the famous *Constitution*, and several smaller vessels were laid down upon what was called the American plan, suggested by Joshua Humphreys, a Quaker ship-builder. His idea, in brief, was, that the ships should be fast-sailing enough to either fight or run at will, and when they chose to fight they must be equal, ship for ship, with anything afloat; they must be longer and broader than the existing type and not so high out of the water. He advocated other strong and reasonable arguments for the proposed model, a very important one claimed being increased stability. The theories of Humphreys were accepted then, and with some modifications have prevailed in the United States Navy to this day. A number of smaller vessels were also added to the navy.

In 1796 the maritime powers of Europe became involved in what was almost a general war, and their measures of hostility against each other had a direct tendency to trespass on the privileges of neutrals.

The two great belligerents in the war that succeeded the French Revolution gradually encroached upon the rights of the Americans. The French not only captured British ships within our waters, but took the same liberties with Americans also. All efforts to obtain redress failed.

In April, 1798, the Government recommended to Congress a plan of armament and defense which it was hoped would

stop the aggressions and avert an open conflict. The depredations of the French reached a pass that could no longer be submitted to with honor.

Under the Act of May 28, 1798, American cruisers were authorized to capture any French vessel found near the coast preying upon American commerce, and the *Constitution* and *Delaware* sailed under such instructions. In June, 1798, the French vessel *Croyable*, which had taken several American ships, was captured by the *Delaware* and sent into Philadelphia. This was before Congress on July 7, 1798, had solemnly abrogated the treaty of alliance formed between France and the United States in the War of the Revolution, on the plea that the terms had been frequently disregarded by France and that the latter country, in face of solemn remonstrances continued to uphold a system of predatory warfare on the commerce of the United States. An express declaration of war was avoided in these measures, nor was it resorted to throughout the controversy. On July 9, 1798, American commanders were authorized by Congress to capture French cruisers wherever found.

When the hostilities began our navy consisted of twenty-two vessels.

On February 9, 1799, the *Constellation*, Captain Truxton, after a brilliant affair, lasting about one hour, captured, near St. Kitts, West Indies, the French frigate, *l'Insurgente*, and sent her to St. Kitts. She lost twenty men killed and forty-one wounded. The American loss was two killed and three wounded. The *l'Insurgente* was taken into our navy, and in July, 1800, sailed on a cruise from which no tidings have ever been received.

On the night of February 2, 1800, there was a fight near Guadaloupe, West Indies, between the *Constellation*, fifty guns, throwing 826 pounds of metal, and the French frigate *La Vengeance*, fifty-two guns, throwing 1,115 pounds. *La Vengeance* lost fifty killed and one hundred and ten wounded; the *Constellation* lost twenty-five killed and mortally wounded, and fourteen wounded. This was a fight in which the American Captain (Truxton) withheld his fire under the greatest

provocation, until he was able to make it tell with crushing effect. He constantly impressed upon the gunners the necessity of aiming and firing with deliberation. This method has for many years prevailed in the United States Navy and has been fostered and encouraged by those in power to such an extent that recently the attention of the nation and the world has been called to the value of such instruction. At midnight, in this running fight, the fire of the enemy died out entirely, the victory seemed won; it was, in fact, won over and over again, for the French flag had been lowered at least twice during the fight, but the people of the *Constellation* did not see it on account of the smoke and darkness, and the Frenchman, very properly, under the circumstances, fought on. About this time the mainmast of the *Constellation* (whose rigging had been shot away), fell, causing the loss of a midshipman and several men. The enemy slipped away and ran into Curacoa. The *La Vengeance* deserves credit for her escape by continuing the fight when in sore straits. There were several other combats of a stirring nature.

This "high seas war" with France began on May 28, 1798, and was ended February 3, 1801, when a treaty of peace was ratified by the United States Senate. Under its terms all Government vessels captured on either side were to be restored. The Americans returned three vessels. No American war ships had been captured except the *Retaliation*, which was originally taken from the French. Seventy-six other French vessels (some of them privateers), had been captured and were retained.

Spears says: "The patriotic American does not care to dwell on this trouble with a people that had rendered such great aid when the nation was struggling for life against the oppressor."

All will admit that France materially assisted the colonies during the War of the Revolution. When the question is asked, "Why was this?" the answer given by the majority is that it was on account of sympathy. This is all nonsense. France at that time was a monarchy and at war with Great Britain, and any alliance she could make against her was a godsend. Before one was agreed upon, Lafayette and others,

as individuals, fled from France and espoused the cause of the colonies.

The selfish nature of France was shown when not having the assistance of the United States in her wars under the Directory, she immediately turned upon us because it was thought we could not defend ourselves. This illusion, as I have shown, was thoroughly dissipated.

Neither France nor any other nation has ever fully shown that they were friendly to the United States. The nearest approach to real friendship has been from Russia. When analyzed, it will be found that the friendship of nations depends, as a rule, upon the commercial aspect, and in my opinion all such expressions as "blood is thicker than water," or its equivalent, are not worth the paper upon which they are written.

We now come to the conflicts with the pirates of the Mediterranean. These were made necessary, as already referred to, because, in the supposed interests of her trade, a civilized nation urged on the Barbary whelps to tear the peaceful passer-by. Not only did the British agent negotiate a treaty by which the pirates could be turned loose into the Atlantic, especially to prey on American commerce, but a British subject, named Lisle, was Admiral of the Tripolitan fleet. Then it was that the Bashaw of Tripoli, seeing the success of the Dey of Algiers in levying blackmail on the United States, declared war against us.

On May 20, 1801, a "squadron of observation," consisting of four vessels, under command of Captain Richard Dale (the officer who distinguished himself when first lieutenant of the *Bonhomme Richard*, with Paul Jones), was ordered to the Mediterranean. Upon the appearance of this squadron off Algiers, the wrath of the Dey, which had not been appeased by the presents (including a vessel), was suddenly modified, but the Bashaw of Tripoli was not so easily moved.

The first fight occurred between the *Enterprise* and the war polacre *Tripoli*, which was captured after a sharp action, in which the enemy twice acted in a treacherous manner after surrendering. The squadron was not strong enough to bat-

ter the walls of Tripoli, and the Bashaw refused to make a treaty. A weary blockade of the port followed.

On October 31, 1803, the *Philadelphia*, Captain Bainbridge, (unprovided with accurate charts), while chasing a cruiser, ran hard and fast aground. The enemy's gunboats opened fire, to which but a feeble reply could be made, and when the tide ebbed the vessel was helpless, and at five o'clock in the afternoon the flag was hauled down. Three hundred and fifteen persons surrendered and they were plundered of everything. A few days later the vessel was hauled off and towed to an anchorage under the castle, the enemy having recovered and replaced the guns, anchors, and shot that had been thrown overboard to lighten her.

The prisoners were confined in filthy dungeons and otherwise ill treated. Through the aid of the Danish Consul at Tripoli, Mr. N. C. Nissen, Bainbridge, on December 5, 1803, sent a letter, written in lime juice, to the American fleet, suggesting a plan by which the *Philadelphia* might be destroyed. This was adopted, and from those (all hands) wishing to undertake the enterprise Lieutenant Stephen Decatur, Jr., was selected to command. At Syracuse the captured ketch *Mastico* was fitted out and sailed on February 9, 1804, for Tripoli. On the night of February 16th, the ketch, maintaining her character as a merchantman, sailed into the harbor, with, of course, the majority of her crew of sixty-two men and a dozen young officers concealed. The wind failing, the ketch fortunately drifted toward the *Philadelphia*. About ten o'clock the pilot, by Decatur's order, steered so as to foul the rigging of the *Philadelphia*. Upon being hailed, the Malta pilot replied that they had lost their anchors and wished to make fast until others could be procured. After some working with a boat, which succeeded in making a line fast to the cable, the men began hauling in. Meanwhile the Tripolitans had sent a stern line. The ketch was within ten yards of the ship when the tension on the stern line threw her broadside to the frigate. Then came the cry, "Americanos!" "Americanos!" The moment for action had come. The momentum already gained was enough to land the ketch fair in place where grapnels were thrown, successfully, upon which

Decatur cried out, "Boarders Away!" He slipped for a moment and this gave Midshipman Morris (father of George Morris, the hero of the *Cumberland*), the honor of being the first on board; then followed Decatur and the rest. The Americans cleared the quarter deck and charged forward. The enemy fled, many jumping overboard, others ran below, where they were killed or disabled by the men who had entered through the ports, some hid and were destroyed later by the explosion. In ten minutes all show of resistance was ended. A rocket conveyed to those outside the information that the vessel was captured. She was most effectually fired and the gallant band hastened on board the ketch, Decatur, who was only twenty-four years old, being the last man to leave the burning ship. The time employed was twenty-five minutes and but one American was wounded. With a light wind, and aided by the large oars, eight on a side, the ketch got away to the sea. The Tripolitans fired at her from the shore batteries, but fortunately did no damage. I will not attempt to describe the destruction of the *Philadelphia* by fire, culminating in her entire obliteration by the explosion of the magazine, and it is impossible to fully comprehend the feelings of the successful heroes and their compatriots who were confined in the prisons of Tripoli.

After this there were several small but gallant contests between the combatants. The *Constitution* and several of the smaller vessels frequently silenced the batteries, but they had no adequate force to land and hold possession. There were enough personal incidents in this war to fill a volume.

Captain Preble, in order to annoy the enemy, decided to send a fire-ship among the shipping. The *Intrepid*, which under the name of *Mastico* had been used in the burning of the *Philadelphia*, was selected and fully prepared with combustibles, powder, shells and the like, under the command of Lieutenant Somers. It was intended to get her in among the enemy's shipping and then fire her, starting also a train, which was expected to burn fifteen minutes before it reached the magazine. Boats were taken along to give the crew a chance to rejoin their friends outside of the harbor. The attempt was made on the night of September 4, 1804. At 8 o'clock the

ketch left the flag-ship with a fair wind. She was seen from the *Nautilus* to pass into the channel. At this moment guns were fired from the shore in rapid succession. The light of a lantern carried by one who ran, was seen passing along the deck of the ketch. An instant later a hell of flame burst up to the sky, a shock followed that made the vessels beyond the bar quiver, and with the shock came a roar that was deafening. The *Intrepid* had disappeared and no tidings were ever received of those who embarked in her.

Our naval force was increased and the enemy was constantly blockaded and assailed. About this time there was an uprising, assisted by Americans, in the Bashaw's dominions. The capitol of his chief province was lost to him, and becoming alarmed he offered to deliver all the prisoners for \$60,000 and to agree never again to trouble American commerce. This offer was accepted and peace followed.

The fleet sailed to Tunis, whose ruler stimulated by the British Consul-General had expelled the American agent. Terms of peace were dictated to him under the muzzles of the guns of the fleet. That was a matter of wonder to the nations of Europe, for never had such a thing been done before.

The treaties concluded with the African pirates in 1805 were more favorable to the United States than to any other power, yet we still agreed to pay a blackmail tribute for the sake of peace.

The attitude of Great Britain to the United States in its relations to the pirates has been referred to, but during the War of 1812 it was more marked. She practically allied herself with them as she did with the Indians in our war of the Revolution.

No sooner did the Dey of Algiers hear of the new difficulty of the American nation, than he raised points about the payment of the annual tribute and made additional claims. Our Consul-General in view of the trouble with England yielded. Upon the flimsy ground that certain supplies sent as tribute were of inferior quality, the Dey sent the Consul away. At this time the British were furnishing him with an ample outfit of military stores. He then fitted out his fleet and sent it in search of Yankee merchantmen. It captured but one small

vessel. An American privateer took four prizes into Tripoli and Tunis. The rulers of these states promptly delivered them to British cruisers.

Just five days after the ratification of peace with Great Britain, the United States declared war against these pirates, and fitted out two powerful squadrons under Bainbridge and Decatur, which were to unite under Bainbridge when they met in the Mediterranean.

On June 17, 1815, Decatur fell in with and captured the *Mashouda*, a 46 gun frigate, after a fight in which the pirate Admiral displayed much good seamanship and bravery worthier of a better cause, losing his life before the surrender. Another war vessel was driven on shore.

On June 28th, Decatur was ready to treat with the Dey. On arriving off Algiers and making signals he received a visit from the Swedish Consul and the Captain of the Port. The latter, whose bearing was presumptuous, was much surprised to learn of the capture of the *Mashouda* and at once changing his manner, begged that hostilities might cease until a treaty could be negotiated on shore. Decatur replied "hostilities will not cease until a treaty is made, and a treaty will not be made anywhere but on board the *Guerriere*." Next day he came out with full power to negotiate. The Americans presented the draft of a treaty, which in spite of the efforts of the Algerines to have modified was complied with in every respect. The American prisoners were released, all claims for tribute were relinquished and the owner of the brig *Edwin* was to be paid \$10,000. The bold front of Decatur brought about this result. As an act of grace on the part of the Americans, the *Mashouda* was returned.

On July 15, 1815, Decatur with his vessels arrived off Tunis, and through the Consul made a demand for \$46,000 to pay for Yankee prizes which had been turned over to the British. The Dey under the pressure paid the money.

Tripoli was reached on August 5th, and after some grumbling the Bashaw paid \$25,000 and released several prisoners.

Decatur reached the station first and by the time Bainbridge arrived, he had practically finished the work.

Later the Dey of Algiers having been successful in making

a treaty with the British for the release of captives, became arrogant and compelled the United States Consul to haul down his flag and leave. The timely arrival of the united American squadrons brought him as well as the rulers of Tunis and Tripoli to terms, and since then we have had no war with the Barbary States.

Shortly after the War of 1812, the Republics of Buenos Ayres and Venezuela commissioned privateers to prey on Spanish merchantmen. It was not long before these ships began to plunder vessels belonging to neutral nations and piracy spread to an alarming extent.

In July, 1817, Captain Oliver Perry, of Lake Erie fame, demanded and obtained from Venezuela indemnity for an American vessel captured by one of her privateers.

In 1821, piracy became so general in the West Indies that the United States had to take vigorous measures against it. A large number of vessels were employed and the service was very arduous; on account of the hiding places of the pirates being on small islands and in shoal water boats were much used, which placed our people at a disadvantage when attacking, and in addition they were exposed to climatic conditions, which in many cases developed into the scourge of the West Indies—the yellow fever. Under many adverse circumstances and with very much loss of life our navy persevered, and after many gallant affairs succeeded in accomplishing its object.

By the middle of 1825, piracy in the West Indies was practically ended.

During the reign of Joseph Bonaparte and Murat in Naples from 1806 to 1815, several American vessels were confiscated upon what we considered untenable grounds. No satisfactory arrangement could be made with the authorities, and the matter was diplomatically discussed for years. It seemed to be as is usually the case with the Latins, a case of "*Manana*", but Commodore D. T. Patterson, who was the father-in-law of the Admiral David D. Porter, when in command of the Mediterranean squadron, 1832-1836, was ordered to assist the United States Consul at Naples in collecting two million dollars of indemnity money. The first demand of the Consul was

haughtily rejected. Shortly afterwards the 44 gun frigate *Brandywine* sailed into the harbor of Naples. The demand was renewed, but only to be treated as the first. In a few days the *United States*, a "44," joined the *Brandywine*; four days afterwards the corvette *Concord* arrived, then two days later came her sister-ship, the *John Adams*; finally on the appearance of two more American war-ships the Neapolitans yielded. This incident alone should be an argument for the maintenance of a strong navy, but at present our good people need no further one than has been furnished during the war with Spain.

In 1832, the United States frigate *Potomac*, at Qualla Battoo in Sumatra, administered a very severe lesson to the Malays, who had seized an American vessel and murdered a portion of the crew.

There were a number of affairs, with marked good results, between our vessels and the natives on the coast of Africa and in the South Sea Islands, in which they were always severely punished for interference with American vessels.

In the Mexican War our navy had no men-of-war to contend with, but it was very usefully employed in blockading ports, and in covering the landing of troops at various places. We also sent expeditions on shore which were usually successful. A large number of merchant vessels were captured.

There were a number of creditable affairs in which the navy of the United States was engaged, which occurring in times of peace attracted little attention and were soon forgotten.

In 1852, owing to the splendid diplomacy (backed by a strong naval force), of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, Japan was opened to the world.

July 2, 1853, Commander D. R. Ingraham, commanding the United States ship *St. Louis*, at Smyrna, boldly prepared to attack the Austrian war vessel, *Hussar*, which was superior in force.

This was because Martin Kosta, an Austrian, who, two years before in New York City, had declared his intention of becoming an American citizen, had while in Smyrna on business, been seized and confined on board the *Hussar*. In-



graham cleared for action and declared that he would attack the Austrian ship, if Kosta was not released by 4 p. m. Before that hour satisfactory arrangements were made and the international difficulty was tided over.

While endeavoring to protect the property of American residents in Canton, China, November 16, 1856, Commander A. H. Foote, of the sloop-of-war *Portsmouth*, was fired upon by one of the forts. An apology being refused, he received permission from the officer commanding the squadron to avenge the insult.

On November 20th, after the *Portsmouth*, *San Jacinto* and *Levant* had bombarded the Chinese, Foote landed with about three hundred sailors and marines with four howitzers, and attacked the forts. There were four of them, built of granite, and mounting one hundred and seventy-six guns with garrisons of about five thousand men. On account of the shoal water the boats could not run into the bank, whereupon, the men waded ashore and formed into three columns. They pushed through the soft mud of the rice fields, dragging the howitzers; fording a creek they charged the works of the first fort which mounted fifty-three guns, many of them of heavy calibre. The Chinese fled with a loss of about fifty killed. The fort on the opposite side now opened on the Americans, but was soon silenced by the guns of the captured fort.

An army from Canton threatened the rear of the Americans, but the fire of our seamen caused it to retreat. On the following day our vessels and boats advanced upon the remaining forts. In spite of a heavy fire our men pressed forward to attack the second fort which mounted forty-one guns. This was handsomely carried and its guns turned upon the third fort, which also surrendered. Meantime a detachment of marines had captured a six gun battery.

Early on November 22d, the fourth and last fort mounting thirty-eight guns was captured. The loss of the Americans in these attacks was twelve killed and twenty-eight wounded. About four hundred of the Chinese were killed. Having accomplished their purpose the Americans returned to their ships.

On June 25, 1859, Captain Tatnall, in violation of the neu-

trality of the United States in the war between China and Great Britain, assisted the English Admiral who was in sore straits at the mouth of the Peiho river, China.

This cost him his barge, one man killed and the flag lieutenant badly wounded. Tattnall at that time used the expression which we often hear quoted in post-prandial efforts, namely: "Blood is thicker than water."

In 1859, Paraguay, which refused indemnity for firing on one of our naval vessels engaged in surveying, was brought to terms by a display of force under Commodore Shubrick.

June 26, 1863, the American steamer *Pembroke*, while said to be on a peaceful voyage and at anchor in the Inland Sea of Japan, was fired upon at one o'clock in the morning by a Japanese vessel. (At that time there was a civil war in Japan.) She was somewhat damaged and getting underway fortunately made her escape.

Commander D. S. McDougal, commanding the United States ship *Wyoming*, heard of this assault and immediately proceeded to the place. On approaching the town of Simonski, he discovered several vessels (some of them men-of-war), at anchor in the harbor. Without any inquiry, upon her standing in towards the town he was fired upon by six batteries. He practically disabled the vessels in the sharp action that followed. After this he was induced to withdraw as he had no force adequate to hold what he seemed to have gained. It was a gallant affair in which the Americans had four killed and eleven wounded. The Japanese later made amends for the unfortunate affair.

In September, 1866, the American trading schooner *General Sherman*, was captured and destroyed and her crew were reported to have been massacred by the natives of Corea. Several vain attempts were made by the commanding officers of our cruisers to ascertain the fate of these men.

In 1865 a French army attempted to invade Corea, but were driven back with great slaughter. This success made the Coreans more than usually arrogant. Reports came to Rear Admiral John Rodgers, that some of the crew of the *Sherman* were still confined in Corea. In 1871, he appeared off the coast of Corea with his squadron, and assuring the authorities

that his visit was peaceful, merely desiring to gain knowledge of the *General Sherman* and her crew, he began making preparations to ascend the Ping Yang River. The natives affected to comply with his wishes, but on June 4th, boats which were taking soundings in advance of the vessels were fired upon by two forts. The Americans responded as well as they could, while two of the smaller vessels hastened to their assistance and soon silenced the forts with their eight-inch shells.

As the Corean flag was still flying and no attempt was made to apologize for the treacherous attack, six hundred and forty-four men were landed, and on June 11th carried the forts by storm with a loss of three killed, including the gallant Lieutenant McKee, and seven wounded. Finding it impossible to obtain any information of the crew of the *General Sherman*, Admiral Rodgers sailed away July 30th. Subsequently the difficulty with the Coreans was diplomatically settled.

On June 13, 1867, Rear Admiral Henry Bell punished the savages of Formosa, for murdering the crew of the American bark *Rover*, by landing a force from the *Hartford* and *Wyoming*, which gallantly drove them into the interior and burned their villages. In this affair Lieutenant Commander A. S. Mackensie, a very promising officer, was killed.

In 1870, a boat expedition from the United States ship *Mohican*, cut out the piratical steamer *Forward*, which manned by a crew of filibusters had been operating on the coast of Mexico; she was anchored in a lagoon near San Blas. The Americans despite a galling fire routed the pirates and burned the vessel. Lieutenant Wainwright and one man were killed and six wounded.

In conclusion I will ask you to permit me to go back to a period anterior to that covered by this compilation.

In a paper which I read before the District of Columbia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, I overlooked a disaster that a mention of at that time might have been of some interest, as we had the terrible fate of the *Maine* fresh in our minds.

The information came from Captain Vincent of Her British Majesty's Ship *Yarmouth*, '64, who says that on March 7, 1778, while cruising to the eastward of Barbados he fell in with

six vessels and bore down upon them. About nine o'clock in the morning he succeeded in ranging up on the weather quarter of the largest and leading vessel. Hoisting her ensign the *Yarmouth* ordered the vessel to show her colors, when the American flag was run up and the enemy poured in a broadside. A smart action now began and was vigorously maintained for twenty minutes, when the stranger blew up. The two ships were so near to each other, that many fragments of the wreck struck the *Yarmouth*, among other things an American ensign, which was not even singed, was blown upon her fore-castle.

The sails of the *Yarmouth* had suffered so much in the engagement that the successful pursuit of the other vessels was out of the question. In this short action she had five men killed and twelve wounded.

On the 12th while cruising near the same place a piece of wreck was discovered with four men upon it. These men in a most wretched condition were picked up, and reported themselves as having belonged to the United States ship *Randolph*—32—Captain Nicholas Biddle, the vessel that had blown up in action with a British ship on the night of March 7th.

Out of the crew of three hundred and fifteen, three hundred and eleven had perished. How different! One set of brave men meeting death in honorable battle, the other murdered in a technically friendly port by the action of unknown assassins.

H19 89





